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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 001127

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SUBJECT: INDIAN FOREIGN SECRETARY GIVES BLUNT MESSAGE OF  
SUPPORT DURING VISIT TO SRI LANKA

Classified By: DCM JAMES F. ENTWISTLE FOR REASONS 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Indian Foreign Secretary Saran delivered a "tough love" message of support, remarkably similar to our own, to the Sri Lankan government during his visit here July 3-4. The Indians are increasingly concerned about "disarray" in the military establishment and believe President Rajapaksa is " beholden" to the radical Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) party. Saran apparently plans to encourage Norwegian facilitator Erik Solheim to visit Sri Lanka soon. End summary.

¶2. (C) Indian Deputy High Commissioner A. Manickam (protect) July 7 gave DCM a readout on Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran's July 3-4 visit to Sri Lanka.

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During the visit, Saran met at length with Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa, with opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe, and with Foreign Secretary Palihakkara (during an overnight visit to Galle). Manickam noted that Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera had declined a one-on-one meeting with Saran, perhaps, Manickam speculated, because "he'd already heard the message" during his recent visit to India and "didn't want to hear it again."

Tough Talk From a Friend

¶3. (C) Manickam said New Delhi had decided to send Saran since the situation in Sri Lanka, in the official Indian view, was becoming increasingly worrisome, especially given that the government seemed to have no sense of urgency about formulating and presenting a formal plan for permanent resolution of the conflict and that some in high government circles seemed to believe the government could win militarily. According to Manickam, Saran had made the following points during his meetings in Sri Lanka:

-- India supports and stands with the government of Sri Lanka in its struggle with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). That will not change.  
--The government needs to get serious about putting a document on the table in order to get some sort of peace process restarted.  
--The government needs to get control of its security forces and address credible reports of abuse.  
--The government should be very wary of arming the LTTE Karuna faction and using it as a proxy ("Nobody denied they were doing so," Manickam said). Karuna might be a useful tool at the moment but could easily turn on the government later.  
--The government should be very careful about the roles Pakistan and China are playing in Sri Lanka. Both are trying to sell "offensive weapons" and Pakistan in particular, in the Indian view, is telling "aggressive-minded" people in the military establishment that a war can be won (especially with arms purchases from Pakistan). India stands ready to continue to supply appropriate "defensive weapons." Saran had been clear: "We will not let you be defeated militarily."

#### Ranil-Rajapaksa Undercut by Defections

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¶4. (C) Beyond these core points, (to which, Manickam said, the government had listened carefully but offered "no real response"), Saran had also, in his meetings with Rajapaksa and Wickremesinghe, urged that the two meet face-to-face to find a way to cooperate ("we made clear we'd be very disappointed if this didn't happen," Manickam commented). Such a meeting was scheduled to take place July 6 or 7 (the

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Indians were trying to confirm it had) but Manickam noted ruefully that last week's defection of another United National Party (UNP) member of Parliament to Rajapaksa's party likely would undercut any gains from a Rajapaksa-Wickremesinghe meeting.

¶5. (C) Manickam stated that Saran had told government leaders here that "things were breaking their way" in terms of Indian perceptions of Sri Lanka. The results of the Tamil Nadu elections had undercut the LTTE, with the new state government making clear that "foreign policy is now formulated in New Delhi." Moreover, LTTE theoretician Anton Balasingham's recent interview comments about the killing of Rajiv Gandhi had gone down badly in India and increased resentment of the LTTE there.

#### "Disarray" at High Levels

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¶6. (C) Turning to general official Indian perceptions of the situation in Sri Lanka, Manickam said there is concern about "disarray" in the Sri Lankan military establishment. Defense Secretary Gothabaya Rajapaksa is weak, in the Indian view, and wields little authority. Moreover, New Delhi believes that corruption remains rampant in the arms procurement process and President Rajapaksa "believes whatever the generals tell him." Manickam said "my RAW officers" have recently discovered that senior military elements may be involved in several abduction rings in which wealthy Tamils are kidnapped and then held for ransom. "Nobody is in charge over there (in the military)," Manickam concluded. The Indians also believe that Sri Lankan FM Samaraweera is "weak" and is handicapped by a poor understanding of foreign policy and a tepid relationship with President Rajapaksa. The President, New Delhi has concluded, is "totally beholden to the JVP," the

Marxist, Sinhalese chauvinist Janatha Vimukthi  
Peramuna party.

¶7. (C) Manickam also said that India will soon have a "tough talk" with Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) leader Douglas Devananda since he is being "extremely unhelpful on peace." In India's view, there is no question that this government-supported anti-LTTE Tamil party has been involved in killings in Jaffna and elsewhere. Moreover, Devananda has been an obstacle to President Rajapaksa's efforts to get Tamils to participate in his "all-party" effort and the related committee which will be tasked with drafting a political proposal. "Douglas needs to clean up his act," Manickam concluded.

Saran-Solheim  
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¶8. (C) Manickam told DCM that, during the visit, Saran had said that he thought Norwegian facilitator Erik Solheim should visit Sri Lanka soon and that he planned to call him after his return to New Delhi and tell him so. Saran, Manickam said, had been a bit vague about why he thought a Solheim visit would be appropriate now.

Comment  
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¶9. (C) Comment: While Saran's reported comments about Pakistan's role here need to be viewed through the usual Indo-Pak prism, the Sri Lankans are, we understand, talking to Islamabad about tanks and other military procurements (and Foreign Minister Samaraweera will, according to press reports, ask for

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greater military assistance when he visits Beijing later this month). Overall, however, Saran's talking points parallel our current message to the government here: get serious about a peace plan, there is no military solution, make sure security force conduct is impeccable. End comment.

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